Michael Dubreuil
Colchester, Connecticut

May 14, 2025

To the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education:

On May 13, 2025, Marquise Lawson presented the results of the “Youth Voices Count Survey” to the Colchester Board of Education. This survey has sparked considerable concern within the community, particularly regarding questions about gender “assigned at birth” and other sexually-oriented topics that many parents found unnecessary and inappropriate. Notably, some of these questions were excluded from the final report prepared by B. Weyland Smith Consulting—raising further questions about the survey’s intent and execution.

While the survey was described as anonymous, the fact that it was administered on school devices and networks has led many to question how anonymous it truly was. More broadly, however, the results point to a more significant issue: our Youth Services Coordinator appears unprepared to effectively support the needs of our children. The data itself falls within the margin of error, offering little that is meaningful or actionable.

Fifty years ago, life was different—simpler in many ways. The internet didn’t exist, television was limited to a few channels, and children found entertainment in toys and sports. Girls often played with dolls, and boys collected sports cards. Today’s kids still play sports, but they also engage in e-sports and video games. The survey placed considerable emphasis on “skins” in video games, but these are not so different from the outfits or dolls of past generations. Similarly, loot boxes, though often criticized, are conceptually similar to collectible card packs like those used in Magic: The Gathering or Pokémon.

The survey failed to reveal anything new or significant. It highlighted behaviors—such as drug use, alcohol consumption, and gambling—in fewer than 3% of respondents. This is a range that many statisticians would consider statistical noise, well within the margin of error.

If Mr. Lawson intends to comment on video games in future reports, it would be wise for him to first gain a clearer understanding of how modern games operate. Most mainstream video games today do not include gambling mechanics like loot boxes, and skins rarely affect gameplay outcomes. Additionally, purchases in these games generally require credit cards, which most minors cannot access without parental involvement. In many cases, kids use gift cards they receive as presents. These concerns, as presented in the survey, seem overstated.

I also found it contradictory that Mr. Lawson would lead a group of students to Dave & Buster's—a venue where children earn tickets from games to redeem prizes. This reward system closely mirrors real gambling, yet it went unmentioned in his critique.

Given these concerns, I strongly urge the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education to reconsider the close relationship between Colchester Youth Services and the Colchester Public Schools. There is no compelling reason for Youth Services to have unrestricted access to school records. Any student who wishes to participate in Youth Services programs can do so voluntarily, but access to protected school data should require explicit parental consent.

Respectfully,
Michael Dubreuil